

## On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

### *Bills of Interest:*

#### **HR 2003** - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, after passage in the House on October 3.

#### **HR 2228** - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

#### **HR 2446** - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Star Print ordered July 17, 2007.

#### **S 3001** - National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 (House version)

- This bill authorizes military activities and programs and DoD-wide programs for 2009.
- The bill was passed by both House and Senate committees, and sent to the White House for Presidential signature September 27, 2008.

#### **HR 2638** - Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2009

- This bill authorizes Department of Defense activities and programs for FY 2009.
- The bill was attached to the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2008 to continue appropriations for Department of Defense activities and programs that would be covered by the regular fiscal year 2009 appropriations bills.

### *Hearings of Interest:*

There are no hearings of interest scheduled for this week.

## ***Special Report: Two-Week Presidential Election Update***

Only two weeks to go until election-day...and for most Americans, it probably couldn't come quick enough. As is typical in the final weeks and days of public election contest, in general, the race is tightening. While most polls show that Senator Obama has a negotiable lead over Senator McCain, the gap is closing. Given the inaccuracies of polling data, sampling error, election fraud and general voting dynamics, the veracity of these figures will always be a target for dispute. In some cases, the leading candidate in a particular state depends on which poll is being observed. In many cases, leads are still within close margins of error, indicating that the state may be a toss-up. In the end, the real answers will only come to light on November 4<sup>th</sup> but the way things are looking now, overall, Senator McCain's chances of pulling a victory are slim. The key to this election, much like 2004 (and perhaps even more so), will be the battleground states. To recap, these include the normal battlegrounds of Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida. Interestingly, this election has also seen Indiana, Colorado, Missouri

and Virginia added to the list. These traditional Republican strongholds now show signs of possibly turning blue and can no longer be considered a lock for the right. Several other states may also be up for grabs including New Mexico, Nevada, New Hampshire and North Carolina. Beyond the polls, pundits and prognostications, most indications are, barring any miraculous undercurrent favorable for Republicans, that Senator Obama will win the election...some have even predicted by landslide numbers. Nonetheless, both parties are moving full-steam in the last minute dash and attempts are being made by both candidates to try and curry favor with as many voters as possible. In a heavily covered, (but altogether not too surprising) event this weekend, General Colin Powell publicly gave his endorsement of Senator Barrack Obama. While the endorsement is seen by many as a landmark shift in the election and a possible, further indication of party-rift, the endorsement will probably not do too much to change voter sentiment. With the strong chances of McCain losing anyway, the point is rather moot. That being said however, it has led to a greater possibility of a future role for General Powell in the Obama administration. On Monday, Senator Obama hinted that a position, either as a cabinet official or an advisory voice, would be open to General Powell, should he choose to entertain the idea or accept it. On NBC's The Today Show, Senator Obama commented on a possible position for General Powell; "He will have a roll as one of my advisors. Whether he wants to take a formal role, whether that's a good fit for him, is something we'd have to discuss." It could get interesting...TCG will keep glassing the field.

## ***Bulgaria: Worthy of Concern***

A recent article in the New York Times has reported a solid degree of information about organized crime in Bulgaria, a concern of growing importance that deserves a second look. Bulgaria, having joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, has become and will continue to be, an important country in both the Balkans and greater Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, the country has also become a haven for various and sundry forms of transnational organized crime and a poster-child for widespread and deeply entrenched corruption. More than anything, the article was a commentary on how the threats of organized crime and corruption have invaded the everyday life of Bulgaria. The article describes the more typical, visible signs of a growing organized criminal presence; contract killings, flamboyant drug-barons and night-clubs filled with lurking thugs. Criminal operators in the country have earned the popular nickname *Mutri*, or 'mugs' - men in black. According to the article and many other sources, it seems that in Bulgaria, organized crime has taken on a deep-rooted, diverse and multifaceted nature. Criminal groups are involved in everything from drug-dealing, political corruption and contraband cigarette and alcohol production to smuggling, construction bid-rigging, money-laundering and crooked real-estate deals. The article also details how Bulgarian criminal groups are siphoning off huge cuts of humanitarian and development aid money; a crime that should be of paramount concern to countries that donate aid, especially the EU. One group mentioned in the article is the Nikolov-Stoykov organization, a criminal empire involved in a hodge-podge of schemes. Organized crime has also turned quite violent in Bulgaria, with fire-bombings, assassinations and intimidation becoming more than just isolated incidents. The article indicates that Bulgaria carries, by most standards, the dubious distinction of being the most corrupt member of the European Union. The article touches on Bulgaria's gray economy, typical money-laundering schemes and connections between legitimate business and organized crime. More importantly, the article highlights how wealthy and powerful criminal players are not just infiltrating the higher sectors of government, but are now actually becoming the government. Simply speaking, no longer is corruption a matter of paying off the right politician. Increasingly, criminals are literally running for elected offices and winning. With this point in mind, the article quotes Atanas Atanov, a former criminal intelligence chief, current member of parliament; "Other countries have the mafia. In Bulgaria, the mafia has the country." Indeed, this is a sobering assessment for a nation that seems to covet greater dialog with the U.S. and aspires to become a full-fledged, respected participant in Western European politics. Political control by connected and capable Mafiosi is a trend that has emerged in other nations as well. Multiple African nations have certainly suffered from mafia-like politicians and many have speculated that the most powerful engines of industry and

energy in Russia are chaired by those with strong criminal backgrounds. In some ways, Bulgaria almost serves as a more visible and current model of what can happen when criminal power-brokers become more politically astute. In Bulgaria, and nations like it, conditions for these situations to bloom are more than ripe. They have growing democracies, the public has a greater amount of disposable income and the culture often seeks to emulate the modernized West (warts and all). Unfortunately, while the country may be quickly modernizing, it may not have institutions strong or transparent enough to cope with corruption, oversight or the organized criminal parasites that exploit vulnerable, growing economies. Currently, Bulgaria has a GDP (PPP) of \$86.71 billion USD; the GDP per capita is a relatively healthy \$11,800 USD; real economic growth is a steady 6.2% and unemployment hovers at about 7.7%. Even though Bulgaria has attracted a solid amount of foreign investment it is equally attractive to international criminal organizations. The 2008 U.S. State Department INCSR identifies Bulgaria as both a production and transit country for illicit narcotics and its location in the Balkans makes it a particularly important point in the Balkan drug trafficking route. Southwest Asian heroin, South American cocaine and ATS products flow through the country regularly. Sources indicate that the country is dealing with a domestic cannabis production problem as well. Additionally, Bulgaria is a major turnstile for human-smuggling, pre-cursor chemicals and laundered cash. While some efforts have been made to stamp out corruption and combat the drug-smuggling business, much work remains ahead in Bulgaria. Like many nations on the rise, Bulgaria's promise could easily be delayed or shattered if corruption and organized crime flourish unchecked.

To view the entire article, please access the following link.

<http://www.ihl.com/articles/2008/10/15/europe/bulgaria.php>

### [Selected News for EUCOM](#)

- [Alleged Top Mobster Arrested from Bunker in Italy](#)
- [Spanish Police Arrest 13 Suspects in Terror Raids](#)
- [Somali Official Says Rebels Killed UN Worker](#)
- [Strained US ties with Venezuela a Boon for Traffickers](#)

### [The Lighter Side](#)

#### [Quote of the Week](#)

***"A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain."***

***~Mark Twain***

***"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."***

***~Albert Einstein***

#### [Prediction of the Week](#)

***In a fashion reminiscent of the Boston Red Sox World Series Championship runs in 2004 against the St. Louis Cardinals and in 2007 against the Colorado Rockies, the Tampa Bay Rays will sweep the Philadelphia Phillies 4 games to none in the 2008 Fall Classic...it's their time to shine!***

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